

Centered Wisdom

Looking over the texts for today, it's easy to get *side-tracked*. Don't get me wrong. Meditating on godly wisdom and the fear of the Lord is always a good thing. A sermon on how Jesus is the wisdom of God in the flesh is always appropriate, but *especially now* in the foolish times we find ourselves in today. Likewise, a sermon on the love of Christ and showing that love, not just with empty lip service, but actually bearing the good and God-pleasing fruits of Christian love with our words and our deeds—our daily lives—and showing that love to a world that *hates* us and thinks we're fools... it's *always* timely and appropriate, but especially in our divisive times today. Let's not ignore the obvious either. Hearing what God has to say about offering up *excuses* for staying away from Him; for being too busy for Him and His means of grace... it's all so very fitting for our ears, not just today, not just as we are now entering into the summer months, but all the time. After all, the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh will *always* give us a million reasons/excuses as to why it's okay for us to blow off God and His gifts. Every one of these different topics that I just named off would make for a great sermon. But... to focus on just one of those topics would mean that we're getting side-tracked.

Consider all these lessons together, paying special attention to the Old Testament and Gospel lessons. Do you notice something? Do you notice the thread that runs throughout? All that talk of wisdom and righteousness and fear and invitations and excuses... *it all revolves around the feast*. Proverbs declares that Wisdom not only prepares the feast, but Wisdom *is* the feast. The one who is wise in repentant faith will also have a very healthy and faithful fear of blowing off the Wisdom King's feast. The wise one knows the consequences of such foolishness. **And it is utter foolishness.** More than that, though, the wise one knows what this feast is all about. The wise one *wants* this feast! The King *wants* you to have this feast! He invites *everyone* to partake of His feast. Nobody deserves a spot at the table. Nobody even deserves a crumb from the table or to even be in the presence of the King... and yet He wants everyone to have it. He invites everyone!

And yet... let's face it: so often the invitation is rejected. Call it what you will. That's what it is. It's a rejection of the King and His feast. And the most grievous reality is not that it's rejected by unashamed God haters. (It is, but that's not surprising. Of course overt-God haters would reject Him.) Rather, what is so troubling and so surprising is the fact that God and His festal gifts are rejected by those who claim love for the King and His feast, but who also claim to have "better" and "more important" things to do. *The excuses they offer!* And let's be clear: They offer nothing more than excuses. It's not that they *can't* be at the

feast; it's that they don't want to come to the feast. There is a difference. The King knows the difference, which is why His anger burns so bright and hot. Listening to the Word of our Lord, you can't miss the fact that ***God's feast is pretty important to God!*** He makes this clear, in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

Here's the thing: I know you already know all this. We've heard it a thousand times before, and even if this is the first time you've ever heard it, it's not difficult to understand. It's not like this is a riddle to be solved. It's so simple a child can understand it. That being the case, I'm not going to go into all the many ways ***we're just as guilty*** as those proverbial fools who blow off the King's feast because they have "better, more important" things to do. And if you are already reciting the excuses in your mind as to why it's still somehow different in your case or your situation, then you're only proving the point all the more.

Just ask yourself: What's really at the center of your life? ***WHO*** is really at the center of your life? Who/what is the most important thing to you? Would your actions agree with your words? Would God agree? The wise ones know the ugly truth. Folks: When you find yourself stuck in a hole, the answer isn't to keep digging. The answer is to **stop** digging. So it is with sin. The answer to foolish and damnable sinfulness isn't to keep digging by offering up more excuses and self-justifications. The answer is repentance. Quit digging the damnable hole! Drop the shovel and turn and cleave to God! *"Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! For the sake of Jesus, be merciful to me!"* That's the wisdom of repentance. Again, the wise ones know this, believe this, and practice this.

Look right here [altar]. This is what it's all about! This is what "Church" is all about. This is what the Christian life is all about. It flows forth from the feast, and it flows back to the feast. It's all about the feast of God; the feast that IS God. ***Notice what is at the center here!*** It's not carpeting or flower beds or food pantries or potlucks or fundraisers or budgets or Bylaws. ***We can tend to get centered on the wrong things, can't we?*** It happens all the time, and it happens with the best, foolish intentions. Christ goes from the center to the periphery. Don't get me wrong. All those other things are important. We are called to be good stewards of the gifts He so graciously bestows upon us. We are called to love as we've been loved; to bear the good fruits of His love in all that we say, think, and do. ***But—again—all this flows forth from the feast. All this flows back to the feast.*** This is the wisdom of faith—Christ at the center. Turn and return to the feast that is God's Wisdom... for you. Return to the Wisdom of your salvation; Wisdom who left heaven's glory in order to take on flesh, all for the sole purpose of taking that flesh to the cross to pay for each and every one of your foolish sins.

And here is that same Kingly Wisdom, in your very presence, right where He calls you to be; ***right where He invites you to feast.*** His feast is prepared for you. His feast that is Himself—His Word, His Body, His Blood—is prepared for you, in your very presence. Yes, the heavenly feast in all glory will undoubtedly be better, but it’s not like your Lord leaves you all alone and starving until He calls you home to glory. He comes to you now! He comes to you with His foretaste of the feast to come.

With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, who are all gathered around Him (for He is at the center of all heavenly worship and praise and laud and honor), ***He brings the feast that is Himself into the center of our midst.*** Again: He comes to us, not because we deserve it; not because we have the right pedigree or résumé; not because we have some long list of accomplishments that deserve such honor. No! ***He comes to us because we are at the center of His concern; His love.*** God so loved YOU—in spite of your foolish sinfulness—that He sent His only-begotten Son to die for you. God so loves YOU (present tense), in spite of your sinfulness, that He continues to send His Son to you; He continues to invite you to partake of His absolutely free and unmerited feast of unmeasured love and righteousness, grace, mercy, and peace that surpasses all understanding.

And with that, we’re going to call it a day. We’re going to leave the focus centered on ***the font and center of the wisdom of our salvation.*** Folks: This is what it’s all about. **He is what it’s all about.** This is why “Church” exists—to be centered on the font and center of God’s feast of Life, Love, grace, and peace. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal Life.*” May this be your Wisdom, your righteousness, and your peace, now and into all eternity.

In His most wise and holy name... **AMEN.**